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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 008898

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/31/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: MOD DEFENDS COLOMBIAN DEMOBILIZATION AND  
REINSERTION STRATEGY

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Milton K. Drucker, Reasons 1.4 (b) and  
(d).

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Summary  
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1. (SBU) Foreign Minister Carolina Barco and Minister of Defense Jorge Uribe briefed foreign diplomats on individual demobilization, hometown soldiers, and the informants network. The event was a review of accomplishments that highlighted the GOC's successes and downplayed its challenges. Minister Uribe brought three former members of the FARC to discuss their experiences in the demobilization and reinsertion process. Although the presentation offered little new information, several audience members seemed to be hearing the information for the first time. All speakers thanked the international community for ongoing support. End Summary.

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Individual Demobilization on the Rise  
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2. (U) On August 25, Foreign Minister Carolina Barco and Minister of Defense (MOD) Jorge Alberto Uribe addressed roughly sixty members of the diplomatic corps to outline progress on the government's individual demobilization program, informants network, and hometown soldiers ("soldados de mi pueblo") initiative. President Uribe had asked the MOD to brief diplomatic officials to increase their understanding of the programs and foster further international cooperation. The presentation lasted roughly two and a half hours.

3. (U) Vice Minister of Defense Andres Penate discussed statistics on individual demobilization. In the first two years of the Uribe Administration, 5,114 individuals had voluntarily demobilized and entered the reinsertion program. Penate said although individual demobilization began under the Pastrana Administration, participation had been much lower before 2003. Under Uribe, the program has averaged over 300 demobilizations per month, due in large part to the GOC's public announcements, commercials, and other appeals to illegal armed groups' rank and file members.

4. (SBU) Of the 5,114 persons who have applied for demobilization assistance, the GOC has denied benefits to 350 because it found that either (1) they were not real members of an illegal armed group or (2) they were real members who had committed human rights violations. Such information is usually uncovered during the interrogation phase of demobilization. Penate stressed that information gathered during initial interrogations has proven useful for understanding groups' psychology and leaders' whereabouts. He said there had only been six cases of alleged abuse during processing. Eighty percent of demobilizing fighters surrender to the Colombian Army in the area of operations and twenty percent are minors (under eighteen).

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Reincorporation Has First Graduates  
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5. (U) Juan David Angel, Director of the GOC's Reincorporation Program, highlighted the program's successes and noted that its first "graduates" were just beginning to leave the two-year program. He added the GOC was grappling with interagency coordination issues, public resistance to the newly reincorporated citizens, and a lack of private sector engagement in the program. His office brought three demobilized FARC fighters to address the audience at the meeting's conclusion.

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Hometown Soldiers and Informants Programs Expand  
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6. (U) Brigadier General Lesmez praised the "hometown" soldiers program and showed a brief promotional video. He noted that hometown soldiers are regular soldiers who receive the same training, equipment, and salaries as other soldiers,

but serve in their own hometowns. The GOC hopes to have almost 23,000 hometown soldiers deployed by the end of 2004 and almost 30,000 by the end of 2005. Lesmez said the program helps bring law and order back to the rural areas.

17. (SBU) Police General Alberto Ruiz Garcia spoke about the national informants network and the program's successes over the last year. He distinguished between community watch volunteers and informants by noting that informants are paid for their information. Both groups receive training and radios to report any suspicious activity or crimes. The GOC claims almost four million volunteers and paid informants who report to the police, army and navy. Almost two thirds are unpaid volunteers. There are roughly three million in the cities, 53,000 in rural areas, and 7,000 protecting major roadways. Minister Uribe said the GOC hopes to have five million participants by 2006.

18. (SBU) MOD Uribe closed by thanking the international community for its cooperation. He encouraged audience members to question the former FARC members about their experience in the program and reasons for leaving the FARC. Juan David Angel told Emboffs that the British Ambassador wholeheartedly supported the presence of the three and suggested that the GOC hold future events with ex-fighters. He also promised to hold another meeting to discuss mass demobilization issues and other related programs.  
DRUCKER